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DEPT for EEB/CBA Dennis Winstead

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [BEXP](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [EINV](#) [CM](#)

SUBJECT: Cameroon's BFIF Proposals

REF: 09 State 126674

¶1. (U) Post seeks BFIF support to fund programs that will help build upon recent positive events in Cameroon to advance U.S. commercial outreach here and in the sub-region. The U.S. is the largest source of foreign direct investment in Cameroon and several dozen American companies have a presence here, mostly based in Douala, the business capital. While Cameroon's business climate is difficult, there are substantial opportunities for new American investments and sales. The Amcham has emerged as a nascent but potentially important platform to promote and assist American companies here, but it needs help getting better organized. Our BFIF proposals focus on business matchmaking and catalyzing local chambers of commerce goals.

Business Outreach to Douala and Neglected Commercial Centers

¶2. (U) Justification: Until lately, our commercial outreach endeavors have focused mainly on Cameroon's major cities of Douala and Yaounde. However, the emerging cities in the other eight regions of the country have rarely been touched. Businesses in these regions demonstrate a strong and growing interest in American products and technology. For example, a small business owner in Kumba, South West Region, recently traveled to the U.S. to order a relatively large quantity of cosmetics and children's clothing. There are other second-tier cities, such as the port city of Limbe, that need exposure to opportunities for importing American products. In addition, five local companies have expressed the need for an ICP report in anticipation of transactions with American companies, requiring travel to gather research outside of Yaounde and Douala. Finally, even with a locally-hired commercial specialist in Douala (the economic capital of Cameroon and the sub-region), the Commercial Section is unable to provide sufficient engagement to American companies and prospective customers of American companies in that most important commercial center in central Africa.

¶3. (U) Post would use BFIF funds to underwrite the travel of commercial staff to these regions for commercial outreach activities, including attending some AMCHAM meetings, promoting International Buyer Programs (IBPs), and business forums.

¶4. (U) Planning Milestones: Travel begins in late January to the West and North West Regions. The Northern Regions will be explored in early March while the last week of March will be appropriate for Douala and the South West Region. Each of these trips would last approximately one week.

¶5. (U) Estimated Costs: USD 4,500 to fund 3 five-day trips to the regions (includes hotel, per diem, meeting expenses, transport); \$3,000 to fund 3 two-day trips to Douala (includes hotel, per diem, meeting expenses, transport).

¶6. (U) Success Criteria/Outcomes: The success of the project would be measured by: (a) number of outreach meetings held with American companies and prospective Cameroonian clients of American companies; (b) the number of concrete trade leads developed; (c) the number of trade deals concluded (in completely new business or expansion of existing business); (d) building a solid and reliable databank of local companies inclined to do business with the USA.

¶7. (U) Follow-up Strategy: (a) Enlarging the commercial databank (American Presence List and Reps of American Companies as well as prospective American importers) to serve commercial staffs' business development activities. Commercial staff will track business leads in the outlying regions and report success stories.

CCG Roll out / Economic Debate - Business and Investment Climate

¶8. (U) Justification: Drafting the Country Commercial Guide has always been difficult because of a lack of data and statistics. Bringing together a cross section of business executives, government officials involved with business and economic policy issues, academics, etc, could provide useful insight into the drafting of this valuable tool. Additionally, few Cameroonian business leaders and government officials are conversant with the Embassy's commercial and business services. Finally, business contacts have highlighted to us the strong need for a forum to discuss business and economic issues. An event to roll out the CCG would serve as a commercial diplomacy tool to showcase Embassy business and commercial outreach programs, help gather crucial information, and focus the public on the business climate. The nascent AMCHAM would host this event, bringing extra publicity to this budding organization which has struggled in Cameroon in the face of other big business chambers.

¶9. (U) Planning Milestones: Two events are planned, one in March to introduce the CCG and another in November to preview the 2011 CCG exercise.

¶10. (U) Estimated Costs: USD 1,500 to fund conference facilities; USD 2,500 to fund two one-day overnight trips to Douala for two persons from Embassy Yaounde (includes hotel, per diem, meeting expenses, transport).

¶11. (U) Success Criteria/Outcomes: The success of the project would be measured by: (a) the quality of collected data for updating the Doing Business (CCG) report, (b) strengthening AMCHAM as a business platform, (c) publicity and press outcomes.

¶11. (U) Point of Contact: Erik Martini; MartiniE@state.gov; (237)22-20-15-00 ext. 4070; LE Staff POC is Jean Paul Yana; YanaJP@state.gov; (237)22-20-15-00 ext. 4118.

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